



KINDNESS

The following is a thoughtful piece written by Nikki Gemmell in The Australian on Oct 15 2011. Kindness can help build goodwill and improve everyone's sense of wellbeing...

It's such a meek little word. Not very fashionable. In some quarters it implies weakness, spinelessness, a lapdog-willingness to please. It seems completely absent from the nation's politics right now. But, my God, the depth-charge of emotion it can stir in the Australian psyche. It's called kindness.

Think of the resonances around the Gallipoli legend of Simpson transporting wounded comrades on his donkey. The heartbreak in the song Two Little Boys about mates helping each other from nursery to battlefield. The stirring speech on a generous heart in the Aussie cinema hit Red Dog. As a girl I remember the extraordinary emotion around Fiona Coote -and when she needed a new heart the Aussies who came forward and said, "Give her mine." It was a powerful lesson about sacrifice and selflessness, those words sanctified by grace. During the recent Queensland floods we had 13 year old Jordan Tyson insisting that his younger brother be rescued first, before being swept to his death.

The older I get the more I respect kindness. Its ability to transform a situation, to soften, move. There's a particularly Australian brand of it. We were flooded by myriad unforgettable kindnesses when we moved back to Oz from England. New to the 'hood, neighbours threw a party to enfold us into the community. When I had the Timewaster, the mums at the boys' school the little state primary held a cooking bee when I gave them all champagne in gratitude I was admonished with "you big dag" and "you silly duffer" -things I hadn't been called for 15 years, and God it felt good.) Drowning within the exhaustion of new parenthood, a neighbour all six foot seven of him arrived one night with gourmet ingredients, cooked up a storm then tenderly held the baby while the chap and I ate. We've been marinated in kindness and it feels peculiarly, movingly Australian.

I'd see it in London a lot. Strapping young Aussie lads breaking all the rules of Tube non-engagement by chatting away to the person beside them. Couches offered to friends of friends; floorspace to store suitcases; dinners and cars. These Aussies felt like teenagers growing too tall, too fast in a grown-up world; sweetly naive, enthusiastic, kind. Tim Smits is the latest Aussie hero in London after getting stabbed while defending women being harassed on a bus. "I come from a family that taught me good values and to respect people," he told Britain's media as he recovered.

Respecting people. A basic, life-affirming quality. Perhaps this reckless and spontaneous Aussie kindness developed in the convict days because those in the underclass had to stick together, unite against the bosses, protect each other. Perhaps it arose because this land is so bloody tough; and if we can't help each other out, well, we're bugged. As Professor Stephen Muecke wrote, "in what other country does the school kid share her musk stick by breaking it and giving her friend the choice?"

It's why the ugliness of a lot of political discourse right now feels so jarring; as if there's a disconnect between people on the ground and those in the public eye; a shocking coarseness. The horrors that the Prime Minister and other powerful women are called on the air waves, the tone of the voices is downright ugly and a world away from those sweet, honourable young Aussies who fly the flag for us overseas.

Kindness is about people who are heart lifters, not heart sinkers. The politics of negativity and sourness is all around us. It feels grubby, reduces us all. Some people think kindness is a weakness but they've got the wrong end of the stick, it's the gift of attention, the highest form of civility. It's about compassion, being a good person. People are drawn to it. Some of our politicians and broadcasters should take note of that ☐ nikki.theaustralian@gmail.com

DEMOCRACY RULES

Sometimes we get calls from owners who want us to act on a matter immediately. This could be fixing a noisy gate, their need to put in an air conditioner or a parking problem.

If the matter is an emergency, such as a blocked sewer, power failure, leaking roof etc. we will of course act immediately and send contractors to make good the problem.

In other cases where the matter is not urgent it needs the body corporate's approval for us to act.

As an agent under the strata & community titles acts we must not spend monies without proper authority. For most of our group's this means the management committee needs to meet and decide the matter.

Whilst we understand that this can give rise to frustration owners need to be aware that they have bought into a body corporate that is required to abide by State Statutes.

We will assist owners on how to navigate the process to have their requests properly considered.


Cheers
Gordon Russell

ps: Do you have any friends who need to read our newsletter? Ring and we will post one out or they can download it from our website ☐

emergency numbers

Plumbing , Gas, Roof Leaks	8356 2750
Electrical	1300 130 229
Breakins & Glazing	0422 650 366
Police to attend - noise/robbery etc.	131 444
State Emergency Service storm/flood	132 500

LEGISLATION UPDATE

The reforms to the Strata and Community Title Acts have been delayed. They are now expected to be through the Parliament in the first half of 2012.

We are advised that the non government members of the upper house of Parliament, the Legislative Council, has been scrutinising the Government over its reasons for these proposed reforms and many others.

The reforms include:

- an advisory service provided by the Legal Services Commission
- requiring managers to maintain professional indemnity insurance throughout the life of the contract
- Compulsory fidelity guarantee insurance for corporations to cover theft or fraud of corporation funds.
- limiting body corporate management contracts to a maximum of two years
- enabling a corporation to terminate a contract with a strata manager at any time
- enabling strata corporation's to impose fines for breaches



of their Articles - up to \$500 for residential groups and \$2000 for commercial groups

- forcing body corporates and their managers to provide a list of owners and contact details upon request by an owner
- relaxed requirements to pass special and unanimous resolutions for strata corporations
- Participation in meetings remotely.
- Court power to convene strata corporation meetings.
- Rights to revoke a proxy at any time as well as limiting proxies to no more than 12 months, and requiring disclosure of proxy documents.
- Better disclosure of conflicts of interest.

We are advised by members of Parliament that some of the largest body corporate management firms in South Australia have been lobbying to weaken the very reforms that would make them more accountable to their clients.

Updates as we hear them will be posted on our website ☐

DON'T EMAIL WHEN IT IS URGENT

The popularity of email and its use from smart phones is on the rise.

Some owners and rental managers are emailing us with urgent jobs. These have included blocked sewers.

We ask that owners and agents call our office with any urgent matters so that we can act immediately. Emails may not reach us or may be read later in the day. This can result in problems & risks for residents and owners.

You MUST phone in order to get immediate attention ☐

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THE POWER OF POTENTIAL

The following are excerpts from an opinion piece by South Australian author Susan Mitchell. It appeared in our local internet newspaper www.indaily.com.au in December 2011.

It made us reflect on the need to encourage goodwill in unit groups, to encourage the best in those we live so close to, and need to co-operate with. This builds goodwill. Failure to nurture often results in unnecessary friction in groups and can lead to them becoming unmanageable. Please take the time to reflect on how we can all help each other to realise our potentials.

It's a scary thing to be asked to give the graduation speech for your old high school, especially when you were not always the most exemplary of students. It's more than forty years since I left Woodville High on my way to a career in teaching,

broadcasting, scriptwriting for television, journalism and writing fifteen books, so when I

looked back to analyse what the school had given me, I realised it had all centred on "the power of words".

Once when I was interviewing one of the most successful, powerful women in the world, who prefers to remain nameless, she took me aside and said "do you want me to show you my most prized possession?" I could hardly wait and was imagining some fabulous jewel or impressionist painting. When she returned she handed me a letter. It was just one page in personal handwriting. "Go on. Read it" she ordered.

It was a letter from her son written when he graduated

"Make sure that you use words to heal not to hurt, to create peace in your lives not war, to create harmony not violence, speak and write of love not hatred, to praise not to criticise"

from medicine, thanking her for bringing him up so well, for supporting him in all his endeavours, for encouraging him whether he succeeded or failed, for loving him unconditionally and for giving him a high standard of values to live his life by. When I handed it back to her she said, her eyes brimming, " isn't that the best gift a child can give a parent"

Words have the power to hurt or to heal, to make you cry or make you laugh. They are the most powerful things we possess. In these days of email, Facebook and Twitter, trillions of words are flying around the world as I am speaking to you. Words are the most precious possessions you have. So I urge you to choose and to use them wisely and well. Make sure that you use words to heal not to hurt, to create peace in your lives not war, to create harmony not violence, to speak and write of love not hatred, to praise not to criticise. These were some of the words that I gave

to the graduates of Woodville High.

I encouraged them to praise their teachers for helping them to get this far, to thank their parents for all their support and help, to thank their friends for sticking with them and to thank their school for making it all possible.

And when I witnessed them being awarded their graduation diplomas, heard the generous cheering from their friends, saw them actually thank and hug their teachers, I knew they were all feeling the power that praise and recognition can generate. www.susanmitchell.com.au

MANAGER THROWS OWNERS OUT

This month we have been appointed to a small group in Kensington. They have come over from a large management firm. They advised their manager at their annual general meeting (AGM) that they were changing firms and asked him to help them complete the business of their AGM. He refused and told the owners leave the manager's office.

Later when we forwarded the closing financial statement to all owners they rang horrified to find that their outgoing manager had charged them \$132 for the meeting, as if the meeting had run its full course. This added insult to injury.

Unfortunately this is an all too familiar tale. We often hear of managers who treat their clients with rudeness, disrespect and a swift exit when they are sacked. The clients are also charged a meeting fee as if the AGM went full term

Our suggestion to managers is see off your clients gracefully, and help them finish their meeting. Remember that this is the last opportunity to make a good impression. Remember they are leaving out of frustration with your firm. Don't give them another reason to complain to their friends and associates about you

INTERNET ACCESS FOR OFFICERS

Since July 1st 2010 UnitCare has been scanning client records. Records include all minutes, accounts, correspondence, budgets, reports, plans, bylaws, policies, articles and the current insurance certificate.

Documents are stored as TIF image files, Word documents, Excel spread sheets, text files and PDFs.

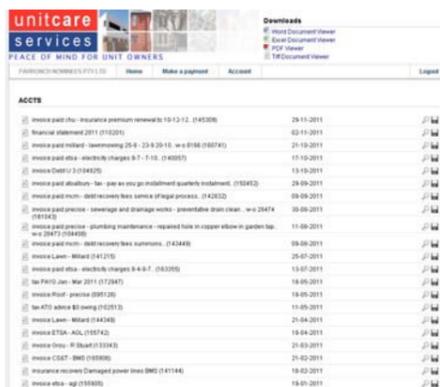
This now makes it possible to share every Corporation's records with their officers.

We supply the software to read these documents inside the website.

We have received encouraging feedback. In one case the electricity accounts were downloaded by the committee and used to assess the economics of installing solar panels.

This online access is still under trial.

All officers have been advised in writing



WATER LEAKS - EARLY WARNING

Water is becoming more precious and expensive. Attending to water leaks promptly is important. This not only saves water and money but also allows the user(s) to seek a leakage allowance from SA Water.

We have 2 groups who have recently had plumbers out to attend to hidden leaks in copper pipes, both appear to have been going on for at least twelve months.

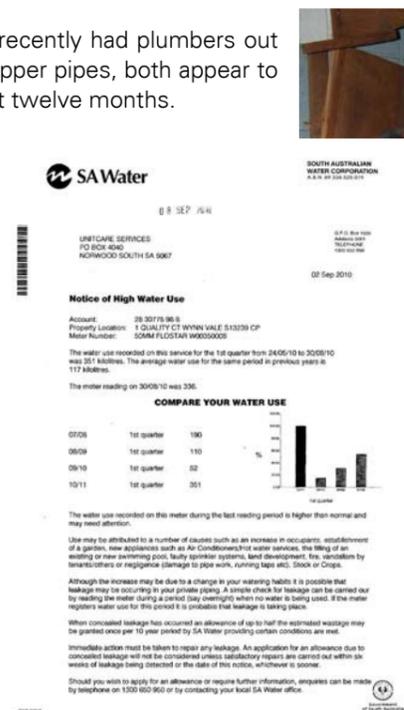
In both cases SA Water sent out warning letters a year ago. One group was with another strata management company and was unaware of how to proceed with a meter check and another group did not follow up with a plumber's inspection or carry out careful overnight water meter checks.

Now that we have the plumber's account if we forward a claim to SA Water. They may not accept the leakage allowance as the time limit has passed.

Another case of leaking water pipes occurred at a group of ten units with common laundries and hot water systems. We discovered the leak when an agent reported that their tenant had problems with their hot water supply. There were

in fact two leaks, one each from the hot water outlet of both hot water services on the 1st floor. The problem had gone unreported long enough to see the external wall of the building soaked causing substantial damage.

We strongly suggest that owners and managers keep an eye on the SA Water correspondence



HOW TO CHECK FOR A WATER LEAK

The following is an extract from SA Water's website. It may be useful if your group believes it may have a water leak.

A leak on your property can waste thousands of litres of water, at considerable cost to you. So follow these easy steps to find out if there are any leaks on your property:

Check the water meter and write down the reading (all numbers - black & red)

Make sure no-one in the households at your group uses any water for a couple of hours

Check the water meter again

If the reading is different to your first reading a couple of hours ago, there is water leak that needs to be found and fixed.

For more information you can read our fact sheet - Reading your meter. www.sawater.com.au/SAWater/YourAccount/MeterReading/

As leaks tend to get worse, get a licensed plumber to fix any problems as soon as possible. You should then call SA Water 1300 650 950.



Under certain conditions, you may be able to apply for an allowance of up to 50 percent of the estimated water wasted due to concealed leaks in your property's pipework. SA Water will give only one allowance in a ten year period of properties continuing in the same ownership. We do not give an allowance if a leakage has occurred on a commercial property and other conditions and restrictions also apply. Please refer to this application form to ensure you meet the criteria.

If a concealed leak has occurred at your property, and you wish to apply for a special allowance, you will need to complete the application form. (Note: If you have a body corporate manager they should have the application forms and will process request.

Call SA Water on 1300 650 950 or your body corporate manager if you have any queries.



a modern water meter water use counter